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they prefer to spend their nights in Karen villages and do so whenever possible. In the Karen hills the paddy-bins, in which is stored the year's supply of rice, are situated far away from the village along the jungle paths. It is almost unknown for grain to be stolen from them. Among some of the tribes east of Toungoo stealing was punished, until recently, by death. Dr. Mason says that he has never found a Karen who would not lie, if it was to his advantage to do so. This does not agree with my experience.

In various respects, certainly, Karen conduct differs from European conduct. To expect the same standards would be unreasonable. Any fair estimate of the Karen, as of any other primitive people, must take into account the fact that morality with them is group conduct. The behavior of the individual must be regarded in the light of the life and customs of the group to which he belongs. If the actions of the people, considered thus in relation to their own social status, appear capable of betterment, efforts should be put forth to lead the primitive folk to the higher level.

The Karen possess intellectual capacity commensurate with that of other races of Burma. Being subject people in the country, their ancestors were precluded from independent thought and action in essential matters. With the advent of education a sufficient number of the young men and women, though the proportion of the latter is small, has taken collegiate courses with credit to show that they are not inferior to others. The same may be said of many who have won success in practical lines of work. I could name several Karens occupying positions of responsibility that require high mental attainments, who are demonstrating that they are not lacking therein.

The old practice of village communities in exiling widows and orphans to the jungle, and the occasional abandonment of little children by their parents who were attempting to escape from raiders are, happily, things of the past. Fear, the instinct of self-preservation, and superstition serve to explain such phenomena, which must not be taken as indicating that the Karen are lacking in love for children or in humane sentiments. Nowadays orphans find a home without difficulty; widows and aged persons are cared for; parents enjoy their firesides and manifest love for their offspring, with whom they are, in fact, too indulgent, even to their hurt; and young men and women are not above giving tender care to some little niece or nephew.

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on a low table. The pile of rice on the tray looks like a heap of snow. The curries or condiments are placed beside the tray in small cups. The members of the family usually eat together. If there are guests the women often wait, either to serve in case the supply needs replenishing, or because they are shy about eating with strangers.

In addition to attending to their domestic cares, the women take their place beside the men in the fields. It should not be forgotten, however, that the latter can cook and perform the work usually assigned to women more readily than men in the West can. In the field the women and girls assist in the sowing, planting, and transplanting of rice on the plains, as well as in the reaping, threshing, etc., doing their full share along with the men. They tend the cotton and vegetables and carry the greater part of the paddy to the storage-bins and from these to their homes. The only work I have seen men doing that I have never observed being done by women is plowing.

The women mingle in the village gatherings and take part in the wedding and funeral festivities, their share in the latter being specially prominent.[2] Their position in their own families depends largely on their personal character. If they possess strong personalities, they gain considerable prestige and exercise influence accordingly. The older they grow the more conservative they become, and not infrequently the opinions of a grandmother will keep a whole family from bettering its condition by engaging in some new occupation. The Karen grandmother holds the first place in the family at the "Bgha" feast, when all of the members are gathered together. She is then the "Bgha a' hko." This peculiar position of hers has been discussed in the chapter on Feasts to the "Bgha."[3] Its religious significance is remarkable and may be a relic of matriarchal government, which is still found in Tibet. But it does not appear to have any effect on the social position of the sex, except in so far as it prevents the younger members of the family, both men and women, from breaking with the religious and social traditions of their forefathers.

In the olden days three classes of people were condemned "to live without the camp." These were cohabiting couples who had not complied with the marriage rites, widows, and orphans. A couple whose union had been formed without the performance and

[2] See Chapter XX, p. 202.
[3] See Chapter XXIV, pp. 248, 249.

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sanction of the recognized marriage ceremonies were ostracized to the extent of having to live outside of the village stockade or, if they belonged to a community living in a single village-house, they were required to occupy a room detached from the main building. The two other classes of ostracized persons, namely, widows and orphans, were supposed to have incurred the displeasure of their "Bgha," and it was feared that their misfortune would become contagious if they were allowed to remain in the village. That is, the "Bgha" of other families would imitate the "Bgha" of the widows' and orphans' families in eating the "k'las" of other husbands and parents, thus depriving the village of more of its members. It was believed that this danger could be avoided by driving the bereft ones into the jungle to shift for themselves. The added risk of the future marriage of these baneful persons was taken into account. This was perhaps negligible in the case of the widows, but the orphans should not be allowed to grow up with other children to become in time eligible for marriage with them. Left to range through the jungle, such orphans, if they survived, generally developed a daring and resourcefulness that inspired the ordinary folk of the village with wonder. Their deeds came to be thought of as due to a supernatural power. In short, they were believed to be magicians.[4]

Family Relationships

In the chapter on Marriage Customs mention is made of the general chastity of the Karen and of their monogamous marriages within the tribe. The rule is for a man to have one wife; but now and then a secondary wife or concubine, known as a "ma po tha," is supported. It may be that on account of the childlessness of the first wife the new connection has been entered into for the sake of offspring, or that the man has simply followed his own inclinations in the matter. Such unions are effected without the formality of marriage ceremonies and are not recognized by Karen society, being entirely irregular.

Westerners, accustomed as they are to doing their own courting, sometimes wonder how happy marriages can be effected in the case of young men and women who are strangers and have never met perhaps till they come together in the marriage chamber. We must remember, however, that with a people like the Karen the physical relationship is more significant than the spiritual. Senti-

[4] See Chapter XXVI, pp. 269-270.

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and a basket of grain sold for a basket of money. He has seen the people dig unhealthy yams and suffer from eating them. In the last three statements the elder is clearly showing the effects of a great scarcity of grain, both on the price one had to pay for food and on the people who were reduced to the necessity of eating bad food. His reference to fires, floods, plagues, and massacres seem intended to suggest the causes of some of the famines that have come under his observation. Notwithstanding the importance of the subject he is dealing with, the elder addresses no exhortation to his hearers, except by implication. 538 671 577

The precept on indolence is full of moralizing. It condemns laziness and enjoins hard work in order to obtain paddy. It teaches the people to do their work with cheerfulness and gladness, as also thoroughly and well. "We love happiness," says the precept, "and our greatest happiness is to clear our fields and build our houses. Everything is in the earth. Work hard with the hoe to dig it out and one can buy drums and silver and other things. It is better to work for wealth than to obtain it by raids and forays." This saying overlooks neither the spiritual nor material rewards of labor. 538 671 461

The precept on helping the poor, as well as those on fornication and adultery, contain references to famine, indicating that periods of extreme dearth of food must have been of frequent occurrence among the Karen. Fornication and adultery are dreadful sins because, among other reasons, they produce bad crops and scarcity of game. In times of famine the rich should help the poor, but the obligation of the former to the latter seems to stop there, so far as the sayings of the elders go. The admonition to help the poor is as follows: 671 538 735 684

"Children and grandchildren, work, every one of you, and be prepared for a time of famine. Then, when a time of scarcity or famine comes, let not the rich and those who have all the rice and paddy reject the poor who have nothing, that you may not lose your honor and be abused, but may be honored and respected. When hard times come and there is famine amongst you, let the wealthy help those who have nothing with which to buy and who can not borrow."

In a similar vein the people are urged to care for widows and orphans lest other countries, hearing of their mistreatment of their helpless ones, shall abuse them and call them poverty-stricken. Even if there are rich men among them, others will not 671 538 736

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believe it. This precept does not appear to have been well observed in practice.[2]

Love of peace is enjoined, because it conduces to happiness, long life, and prosperity. The daughters of one who loves peace,

DIPPING WATER FROM A SHALLOW STREAM
These little girls are all wearing the single white "hse," but the men have their loins girded up after the Burmese fashion.

the people are assured, will conduct themselves with propriety, and his sons will live happily. Evil-doers are doomed to ruin and disaster. Their "drums will become the property of others, their daughters will become slaves, and their sons, servants. Their lands will be destroyed, and their country will come to destruction. Evil-doers do not live to grow old."

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The section relating to duties to parents recounts the many cares of parents and enlarges on the expenditure of strength and sympathy by the mother in behalf of her children. The deduction set forth is that children should care for their parents when they grow old and provide them with food and drink. Those who fail in the performance of such filial duties will suffer for their sin, and

[2] See pp. 134, 258.

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willed persons been able to resist their magic, but also in some instances have put the magic-workers to death. These "wi" are not supposed to be easily persuaded into exercising their sinister influence. It is said that they reserve their offices for the client who has suffered a real injury, or one whose distress is revealed by his tears, or one against whom seven malicious attempts have been made. Usually they are men of high-strung nervous temperament. Occasionally, other persons think themselves possessed of magic power ("pgha pgho") and try to use it for good or ill in influencing their own or some one else's life. However, a casual practitioner of the art must observe proper reticence in regard to such matters, or run the risk of falling into disrepute or of exciting the envy of some more experienced "wi." Many persons living in Karen villages at the present time are usually spoken of not as "wi," but as "k' thi thra" ("medicine-teachers" or doctors). They are very backward about referring to their art.

A class of persons supposed in the early days to be gifted with magical powers, consisted of the orphans and other unfortunates who were driven from the villages and compelled to live by themselves in the jungle.[1] In Karen folk-lore many tales recount episodes in which an orphan exercises his uncanny powers, usually in defense of some weaker person whom he saves or helps to get the better of his foes. One such story tells of a chief whose village had been raided again and again. Having no orphan magician at hand to aid him, he was beaten every time; while the victorious villages were every one of them blessed in having such a champion. The chief, anticipating another raid, sent his daughter away because he had no one else to give in ransom, should he be vanquished again. She ran through the jungle until she fell exhausted, and next morning was found by an orphan, one of seven brothers, near whose hut she had fallen. She related her story to the aged grandmother of the seven, and they were so captivated by her that they determined to aid her father in recovering the bronze drums and other treasure that he had surrendered, in order to save his village from destruction. Before the grandmother would consent to her grandsons' enterprise, she required them to make a trial of their strength. This they did by each catching a tusker elephant in the jungle, grasping him by the fore and hind legs and using him as a huge kind of battering-ram in knocking down a clump of bam-

[1] See pp. 128, 134.

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T36 789 538 boos. Quite satisfied with this demonstration of their magic power, the grandmother allowed them to go on their mission. In the battle that followed the seven orphans severally engaged the champions of the seven victorious villages and won back for the maiden's father the treasure that he had been forced to pay over in the previous raids. The oldest of the brothers then received the hand of the chief's daughter in marriage, having cleared himself of the curse that had rested upon him as an orphan.

Why such extraordinary powers have been attributed to the once despised orphan is not known. At first he was feared for the bad luck he might bring to the other inhabitants of the village, if allowed to remain within the stockade. That he did not perish as an outcast in the jungle must have been regarded as a sort of miracle by the village community, whose members had always lived and worked together in close interdependence. They must have looked upon him with awe and believed that he was protected by some powerful influence, not only from the evilly disposed "Bgha" but also from the dangers of the forest. It was, therefore, natural enough to regard him in course of time as a person who had "pgho." In these later days orphans appear to have been considered less extraordinary persons, as indicated by the following couplet:

[539] "In olden times the orphans had magic.
Orphans now must talk" [like other persons].

741 753 757 The "k' thi thra" or "medicine-teachers" constitute another group that should be mentioned among magic-workers. It is true that they possess a rude knowledge of the efficacy of roots and herbs, but they also sometimes dispense disgusting and filthy concoctions. The Karen, like other primitive peoples, regard sickness as due to some mysterious force or "mana" and believe that all medicine, even that prescribed by European physicians, operates to dispel or vanquish this force. They expect a dose to cure immediately and discredit a medicine that must be taken repeatedly. Hence, in general, they prefer their native "medicine-teacher" and his nostrums to the educated physician and his medicine, the therapeutic effects of which are beyond their understanding. Doubtless, some Karens do distinguish between the charm and the drug, but most of them seem to cling to the idea that the drug has more or less of the charm connected with it.

789 Magic among the Karen, as among other primitive races, is divisible into white and black magic. The former is the beneficent

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"a spirit of equality, and governed by the moral influence of its natural heads alone." (Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, Vol. I., p. 407.) The chief of these elders is called *Sawkè*; he gives his name to the village. The faults of the Karéns are their dirt, their addiction to drink, and a degree of superstition so extreme that a motherless infant is refused adoption for fear of turning the wrath of a vengeful demon upon the foster-mother. In epidemics of cholera and small-pox the Karéns abandon their villages in panic fear. The Karéns are shorter but of stouter build than the Burmans and Talaings, and of much fairer complexion. But their name of "white" Karén is derived from their clothing. Very characteristic is their short upper arm. Young people of splendid physique may be seen; but the conditions of life are so hard, and malaria is so prevalent in the forests, that the population remains stationary—by the census of 1891, 633,600. The toilsome Karén finds lightness of heart in the liquor he brews, a remarkable contrast to the vivacious and abstinent Burman. The contrast is borne out in the dreary wail of the Karén music and the bright and exuberant cadences of the Burmese. Karén children grow independent very young (No. 355), and begin their heavy outdoor labour soon. Early physical exertion possibly accounts for the second moral quality noted above. The hill-cultivation is greatly at the mercy of the seasons, from burning-time in April to harvest in October. The hardship is aggravated by a superstition of divination-bones (*Kyeyyo*) which often tabooes the most eligible sites. Scarcely have the crops been garnered than the clearing of a fresh site for the village begins.

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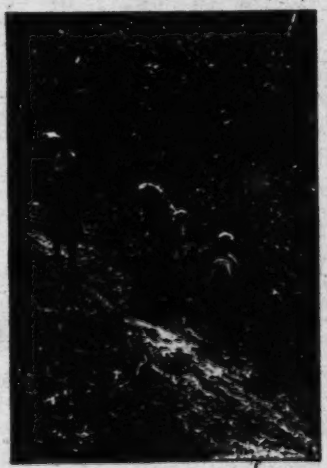

334. KARENS GOING OUT TO WORK.